The Transfiguration Mark 9:2-13

**2**After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. **3**His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. **4**And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

**5**Peter said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ **6**(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

**7**Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: ‘This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!’

**8**Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

**9**As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. **10**They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what ‘rising from the dead’ meant.

**11**And they asked him, ‘Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?’

**12**Jesus replied, ‘To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? **13**But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.’

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| 1. Where this story fits in the Bible – what comes before and after, which book it is in, where it fits in the context of the whole Bible, etc.  2. What the story is really about: *The Literal Meaning: What the authors intended to be understood*  3. Any ethical message or messages in the story and how they apply to us today: *The moral issues, things that relate to our choices and human behaviour in so far as they affect my relationship with God, with others, and with myself.*  4. Any links that may be made with other parts of the Bible or with the Sacraments. *The allegorical connections: how this passage has connections with other parts of the Bible, and also how it relates to the sources of grace: the Sacraments of the Catholic Church*  5. Any message or messages about life after death, Heaven, Hell, etc.  Any sources or reference materials must be correctly acknowledged using the *Chicago referencing format.* |

**The Place of the story in the Bible**

The Transfiguration story in found in the New Testament. It is recounted in three of the four gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke. Each gospel adds some unique detail to the story. In Mark’s Gospel this story comes directly after Jesus asks the apostles who people think he is. They have told him that some think he is Elijah or ones of the prophets. Peter has declared on behalf of the apostles their belief that he is the Christ, the anointed one. The transfiguration occurs about 6 days after this discussion. After the event Jesus casts a devil out of a possessed boy, and then, as he goes on through Galilee, he tells his followers that he will be killed and will rise again. They cannot grasp what he is saying, since it is something completely new to them.

**What is this story about?**

Jesus goes up a mountain with three of his apostles, Peter, James and John. As they look on he becomes ‘transfigured’. This means that he became shining and white. Then two of the men appeared and spoke with him. They were the great prophets Moses and Elijah. Luke’s version tells us that they were speaking about what was soon to happen to him in Jerusalem (see Luke 9:31). The three apostles are amazed and overwhelmed. Peter, in his amazement, suggests that three tents should be built there for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Then they heard a voice from a cloud that descended over the spot saying: This is my beloved Son, listen to him.’ After this everything become normal again. The two prophets disappeared and Jesus’ appearance became quite normal. As they came down from the mountain Jesus spoke about what they had seen and explained to them that he was to die and rise from the dead. The apostles ask Jesus about the meaning of teaching of the scribes that Elijah must come again. Jesus explains that Elijah has already returned and has been dealt with. He is actually referring to John the Baptist, who was treated in similar way to the way Elijah was treated in his time.

**The ethical message of the story**

**Links that may be made with other parts of the Bible or with the Sacraments**

This story has many links with other parts of the Bible and with the Sacraments

Links with the Old Testament are very rich. Moses and Elijah are key figures in the Old Testament. Moses represents the law, and Elijah represents the prophets. Both Moses and Elijah encountered God on Mount Sinai. While God gave Moses the ten commandments, the people below saw the mountain ablaze with lightening and wrapped in smoke (Exodus 20:1-20). When God speaks with Elijah he tells him to anoint Jehu (Jesus!), son of Nimshi, as King of Israel (1 Kings 19: 8-18).

Now, in *this* story, Moses and Elijah come to speak with Jesus, who is resplendent and shining. A cloud covers tem, and God speaks again, saying ‘THIS is my beloved Son, listen to HIM’ (Mark 9: 7).

There are numerous links with New Testament passages. Jesus makes a link between Elijah and John the Baptist when he says: ‘Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.’ (Mark 9:13). Just as Elijah’s life was threatened by Jezebel, the wicked wife of King Ahab (1 Kings 19: 1-10), John was beheaded by Herod at the request of his wife, Herodias (Mark 6: 27).

The things that Jesus spoke of actually occurred, and Jesus did truly rise from the dead. Later St Paul declares explicitly that if Jesus had not risen from the dead, then everything is pointless. The crucial passage is 1 Corinthians 15. In it Paul explains that the whole of faith and belief in Jesus rests on the reality of the resurrection. It is through the resurrection of Jesus that our sins are forgiven, and that we can enter eternal life.

**The message about life after death, Heaven, Hell, etc.**

The story has an important message about death and eternal life. Jesus speaks of the fact that he is to die and to rise from the dead as so fulfil all the prophesies. In 1 Corinthians 15, St Paul masterfully explains the vital importance of these events and their implications for all people. Jesus died for our sins, and then rose from the dead. Just as He rose, we will also rise. It is this that gives purpose and meaning to faith in Jesus Christ. If this is not so, then, Paul says, there is no point to the message (1 Corinthians 15: 32).

The death and resurrection that Jesus foretold is what gives meaning to living a good life, following the Commandments of God: those given to Moses and by Jesus Himself. The whole point is to enable union with God in a life that will be with him in all eternity. This is His message, this is why He came to earth as a human being: to open the possibility of this for all human beings.